

In the Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A composite wheel assembly comprising:

a wheel having an outboard surface thereon, said wheel further having a disc portion and a rim portion circumscribing said disc portion, said rim terminating in a rim flange having a radially outer surface, said rim flange further having a lip at an axially outermost portion thereof;

a trim ring secured to ~~said outboard surface of~~ said wheel, said trim ring covering said lip and at least a portion of said radially outer surface of said rim flange of said wheel; and

a cladding secured to ~~said outboard surface of~~ said wheel; and

~~means for attaching said trim ring and said cladding to said outboard surface of said wheel, said attaching means configured to overlap said trim ring and said cladding in a radial direction regardless of tolerance variations of said trim ring and said cladding whereby said radial overlapping relationship gives a visible impression that said trim ring and said cladding form a single wheel cover element~~

said trim ring and said cladding being in an overlapping relationship in a radial direction.

2. (Original) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 1, wherein said cladding overlaps said trim ring.

3. (Original) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 1, wherein said trim ring overlaps said cladding.

4. (Original) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 1, further comprising an adhesive deposited between said trim ring and said wheel.

5. (Currently Amended) A composite wheel assembly comprising:

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a wheel having an outboard surface thereon, said wheel further having a disc portion and a rim portion circumscribing said disc portion, said rim portion terminating in a rim flange having a flange lip at an axially outermost portion thereof; said rim flange further having a radially inner surface; and a radially outer surface substantially opposite said radially inner surface, said flange lip connecting said radially inner and outer surfaces;

a trim ring mounted to ~~said outboard surface of~~ said wheel, said trim ring having a flange portion covering at least a portion of said outboard surface of said wheel, and a U-shaped portion extending from said flange portion, said U-shaped portion having a radially outer wall covering at least a portion of said radially outer surface of said rim flange of said wheel; said U-shaped portion further having a radially inner wall covering said radially inner surface of said rim flange of said wheel; and, said U-shaped portion further having a lip portion extending from said radially outer wall to said radially inner wall of said trim ring whereby said trim ring covers at least a portion of said outboard surface and said rim flange to create a visible impression that said trim ring is an integral portion of said outboard surface of said wheel and not a separately attached component;

means for securing said trim ring to said wheel;

a cladding secured to at least a portion of said outboard surface of said wheel, said cladding having a radially outermost periphery; and

means for securing said cladding to said wheel;

~~whereby said trim ring and said cladding are configured to overlap in a radial direction regardless of tolerance variations of said trim ring and said cladding such that said overlapping relationship gives a visible impression that said trim ring and said cladding form a single wheel cover element~~

said trim ring and said cladding being in an overlapping relationship in a radial direction wherein said flange portion of said trim ring and said radially outer periphery of said cladding overlap.

6. (Original) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 5, wherein said means for securing said trim ring to said wheel comprises an adhesive deposited between said trim ring and said wheel.

7. (Previously Amended) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 5, wherein said means for securing said cladding to said wheel comprises:

an annular detent provided in said disc portion of said wheel; and

a plurality of protuberances extending in a direction axially inward from said cladding, each of said plurality of protuberances resiliently engaging said annular detent of said disc portion of said wheel so as to secure said cladding to said outboard surface of said wheel, said plurality of protuberances concentrically locating said

cladding with respect to said rim flange of said wheel and spaced from said outboard surface of said wheel so as to define at least one gap therebetween.

8. (Original) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim, 7 wherein said means for securing said cladding to said wheel further comprises an adhesive deposited between said cladding and said wheel.

9. (Previously Amended) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 5, wherein said means for securing said trim ring to said wheel further comprises an interlocking portion on said rim flange of said wheel and a complementary interlocking portion on said trim ring.

10. (Previously Amended) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 9, wherein said interlocking portion of said trim ring comprises an annular hem formed in said radially outer wall of said U-shaped portion of said trim ring and said interlocking portion of said rim flange of said wheel comprises an annular groove in said radially outer surface of said rim flange, whereby said annular hem engages said annular groove for securing said trim ring to said wheel.

11. (Previously Amended) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 9, wherein said interlocking portion of said trim ring comprises an annular bead in said radially outer wall of said U-shaped portion of said trim ring and said interlocking portion of said rim flange of said wheel comprises an annular groove in said radially outer surface of said rim flange, whereby said annular bead engages said annular groove for securing said trim ring to said wheel.

12. (Previously Amended) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 9, wherein said interlocking portion of said trim ring comprises a hem portion in said radially outer wall of said U-shaped portion of said trim ring, and said interlocking portion of said rim flange of said wheel comprises a tapered portion of said radially outer surface, said tapered portion being configured to slope in a radially inwardly and axially inboard direction whereby said hem portion of said trim ring grippingly engages said tapered portion of said rim flange of said wheel.

13. (Previously Amended) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 5, wherein said radially outer surface of said rim flange is beveled to slope in a radially inwardly and axially outboard direction.

14. (Previously Amended) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 5, wherein said radially outer surface of said rim flange has a shoulder portion and is beveled to slope in a radially inwardly and axially outboard direction from said shoulder portion.

15. (Previously Amended) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 5, wherein said radially outer wall of said U-shaped portion of said trim ring has a wheel weight bead for retaining a wheel weight thereto.

16. (Original) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 5, wherein at least a portion of said cladding overlaps at least a portion of said trim ring.

17. (Original) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 5, wherein at least a portion of said trim ring overlaps at least a portion of said cladding.

18. (Previously Amended) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 17, wherein said at least a portion of said trim ring has a radial projection that overlaps said at least a portion of said cladding.

19. (Previously Amended) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 18, wherein said radially inner wall of said U-shaped portion of said trim ring terminates in an axially extending tab portion.

Cladding
20. (Previously Amended) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 17, wherein said cladding has an annular groove and said trim ring has a complementary annular projection adapted to interlock with said annular groove.

21. (Previously Amended) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 5, wherein one of said trim ring and said cladding is surface treated and the other of said trim ring and said cladding is painted so as to provide a two-tone appearance to said wheel.

22. (Original) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 5, wherein said trim ring is composed of stainless steel and said cladding is composed of plastic.

23. (Original) The composite wheel assembly as claimed in claim 5, wherein said trim ring is composed of an aluminum alloy and said cladding is composed of plastic.

24. (Currently Amended) A wheel covering combination for covering a wheel to produce a composite wheel assembly, said wheel covering comprising:

a wheel having an outboard surface thereon, said wheel further having a disc portion and a rim portion circumscribing said disc portion, said rim having a rim flange defined at a radially outermost portion thereof, said rim flange having a flange lip at an axially outermost portion thereof, said rim flange further having a radially inner surface and a radially outer surface substantially opposite said radially inner surface, said flange lip connecting said radially inner and outer surfaces;

Clad
a trim ring mounted to at least a portion of said rim flange of said wheel, said trim ring having a flange portion covering at least a portion of said outboard surface of said wheel, said trim ring further having a U-shaped portion extending from said flange portion; said U-shaped portion covering said lip portion of said rim flange and at least a portion of said radially outer surface of said rim flange of said wheel thereby conforming to at least a portion of said outboard surface of said wheel to provide a visible impression that said trim ring is actually part of said wheel;

a cladding secured to at least a portion of said outboard surface of said wheel, said cladding having a radially outermost periphery; and

~~means for attaching said trim ring and said cladding to said wheel, said attaching means configured to overlap said trim ring and said cladding in a radial direction regardless of tolerance variation of said trim ring and said cladding whereby said overlapping relationship gives a visible impression that said trim ring and said cladding form a single wheel cover element covering said outboard surface of said wheel~~

said trim ring and said cladding being in an overlapping relationship in a radial direction wherein said flange portion of said trim ring and said radially outer periphery of said cladding overlap.

25. (Currently Amended) A method for producing a composite wheel assembly comprising the steps of:

providing a wheel having an outboard surface thereon, said wheel further having a disc portion and a rim portion circumscribing said disc portion, said rim having a rim flange defined at a radially outermost portion thereof, said rim flange having a radially inner surface; and a radially outer surface substantially opposite said radially inner surface; said rim flange further having a flange lip connecting said radially inner and outer surfaces;

providing a trim ring having a flange portion and a U-shaped portion extending from said flange portion, said trim ring further having a central opening of a predetermined inner diameter;

providing a cladding having a predetermined outer diameter wherein said predetermined outer diameter is greater than said predetermined inner diameter of said trim ring;

assembling said trim ring to said wheel such that said flange portion of said trim ring covers at least a portion of said outboard surface of said wheel and said U-

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shaped portion of said trim ring radially and axially covers at least a portion of said radially outer surface of said rim flange of said wheel; and

assembling said cladding to said outboard surface of said wheel such that said trim ring and said cladding overlap, said trim ring and said cladding thereby being in an overlapping relationship in a radial direction ~~regardless of tolerance variation of said trim ring and said cladding whereby said overlapping relationship of said trim ring and said cladding gives a visible impression that trim ring and said cladding form a single wheel cover element.~~

26. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 25, further comprising the step of:

applying an adhesive between said wheel and at least one of said trim ring and said cladding to secure the assembly of said composite wheel assembly.

27. (Previously Amended) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein said step of assembling said cladding to said outboard surface of said wheel comprises assembling at least a portion of said cladding axially outboard with respect to at least a portion of said trim ring.

28. (Previously Amended) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein said step of assembling said cladding to said outboard surface of said wheel comprises assembling at least a portion of said cladding axially inboard with respect to at least a portion of said trim ring.

29. (New) A composite wheel assembly comprising:

a wheel having a central axis, said wheel comprising a disc and a rim flange circumscribing said disc wherein at least a portion of said disc and said rim flange define an outboard surface of said wheel, said rim flange circumscribing said central axis of said wheel, said rim flange comprising an axially outboard surface extending substantially radially outward, said rim flange further comprising a radially inner surface extending substantially axially outboard from said axially outboard surface, a radially outer surface substantially opposite said radially inner surface, and a flange lip connecting said radially inner and outer surfaces;

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a trim ring mounted to at least a portion of said outboard surface of said wheel, said trim ring comprising a flange portion covering at least a portion of said axially outboard surface of said rim flange of said wheel, said trim ring further comprising a lip portion extending from said flange portion, said lip portion being positioned over at least a portion of said flange lip of said rim flange of said wheel thereby substantially conforming to at least a portion of said outboard surface of said wheel, said lip portion comprising a radially inner wall at least partially covering said radially inner surface of said flange lip of said wheel, said lip portion further comprising a radially outer wall opposite said radially inner wall and at least partially covering said radially outer surface of said flange lip of said wheel, said lip portion further comprising an axially outboard wall between said radially inner and outer walls and at least partially covering said flange lip of said rim flange, whereby said trim ring covers at least portions of said axially outboard surface and said flange lip of said rim flange to provide a visible

impression that said trim ring is a portion of said outboard surface of said wheel and not a separately attached component;

means for securing said trim ring to said wheel;

a cladding overlaying at least a portion of said outboard surface of said wheel, said cladding comprising an inboard surface facing at least a portion of said outboard surface of said wheel; and

means for securing said cladding to said wheel;

at least a portion of one of said trim ring and said cladding overlapping at least a portion of the other of said trim ring and said cladding in a radial direction so that any radial dimensional variation in said trim ring and said cladding is taken up by said overlapping relationship so as to provide a continuous bright appearance across said outboard surface of said wheel.

30. (New) A wheel covering combination for covering a wheel to produce a composite wheel assembly, said wheel having a disc and a rim flange circumscribing said disc and a central axis of said wheel, said rim flange comprising an axially outboard surface extending substantially radially outward, said rim flange further comprising a radially inner surface extending substantially axially outboard from said axially outboard surface, a radially outer surface substantially opposite said radially inner surface, and a flange lip connecting said radially inner and outer surfaces, said wheel covering combination comprising:

a trim ring mounted to at least a portion of said rim flange of said wheel, said trim ring comprising a flange portion covering at least a portion of said axially outboard surface of said wheel, said trim ring further comprising a lip portion extending from said flange portion, said lip portion being positioned over at least a portion of said flange lip of said rim flange of said wheel thereby conforming to at least a portion of said outboard surface of said wheel to provide a visible impression that said trim ring is actually part of said wheel; and

Cladding
a cladding overlaying at least a portion of said wheel, said cladding comprising an inboard surface complementary to and facing at least a portion of said outboard surface of said wheel, such that said cladding substantially conforms to at least a portion of said outboard surface of said wheel to provide a visible impression that said cladding is actually said outboard surface of said wheel;

at least a portion of one of said trim ring and said cladding overlapping at least a portion of the other of said trim ring and said cladding in a radial direction on said wheel, so that any radial dimensional variation in said trim ring and said cladding is taken up by said overlapping relationship and so as to provide a continuous bright appearance across said outboard surface of said wheel.
